

# Cultural Resources

## *HISTORICAL CONTEXT*

The Jacob Fork community, located north of the confluence of the Jacob Fork and Henry Fork, was one of the earliest identifiable communities in what would become Catawba County.

Evidence indicates that Henry Weidner trapped in Catawba County as early as 1739. However, it wasn't until after 1748 that Weidner extended the Catawba Path west from Sherrills Ford, the earliest established community in present day Catawba County, along the ridge to Newton then south to Jacob Fork. In 1750 Weidner obtained his first land grant in the Jacob Fork area. The early inhabitants of Jacob Fork were descendents of Weidner or young men he gathered. In the late 1760s, Weidner erected a school one mile south of the location that would become Zion Church in 1790. Churches played a valuable role in the early communities as they provided the means for residents to pass their values on to following generations. By 1820 John Wilfong was merchandising and operating a post office in the Jacob Fork community. The Jacob Fork community also served as a melting pot for German and English and by 1850 people of all types and backgrounds resided in Jacob Fork.



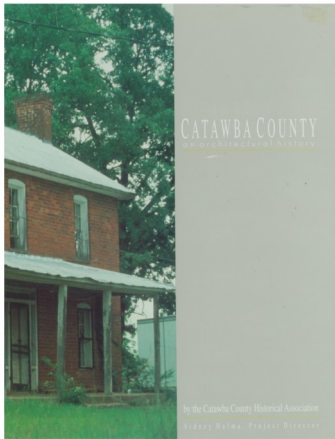
*1924 Catawba County Courthouse*

### Cultural Resources

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Bakers Mountain is another important historical landmark located within proximity of the Plan area. Peter Baker settled in the area in the 1700s and his son David resided there during the 1800s. The Mountain was named after the David Baker family. Original settlers used the south slope of the mountain for grazing cattle each summer, Tories used the mountain as a hideout during the Revolutionary War and local Germans pilgrimaged to the mountain slopes every Easter Monday.

Bakers Mountain remains a landmark that residents want



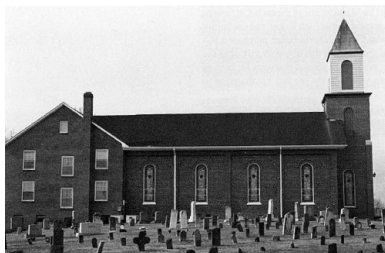
*Catawba County:  
An Architectural History  
By Sidney Halma*

to protect and preserve. Today, the County owns and operates Bakers Mountain Park, located on a portion of the mountain, to preserve Catawba County's natural heritage. The Park is located on the highest point of elevation in Catawba County (1780 feet), features 189 acres of mature Chestnut Oak forest, and offers nearly six miles of trail to explore. Visitors will experience a variety of wildlife and plants that are native to the North Carolina Mountains.

The rural nature of the Plan area reflects the largely agricultural heritage of the community which still remains. Residents continue to identify churches as significant contributors to the community, and Startown Elementary School occupies a site in continuous operation as a school for over 100 years.

## ***PRESENT DAY HISTORICAL SITES***

The Plan area is fortunate to have several sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places which have been recognized by state and federal historians as worthy of preservation for their significance in American history, architecture and culture. Several other properties of local historic significance also exist within proximity to the Plan area. The property locations are shown on Map 11 and briefly described below. *See Map 12: Cultural Resources.*



*Zion Lutheran Church  
and Cemetery*

**Zion Lutheran Church and Cemetery**—Located on the west side of Zion Church Road, the church was organized in 1790 and became the first exclusively Lutheran Church in North Carolina west of the Catawba River. The original church was a two-story log structure finished with hand-planed beams. The second and current brick church was built in 1804 and was subsequently expanded. Yoder's Mill produced handmade brick for the church. The cemetery adjacent to the church contains the graves of many members of the congregation from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to present.

**Yoder's Mill**—The property is preserved as an archeological site. The complex of buildings consists of eight vernacular buildings, showing a use of stone, frame and log construction. Preserved and in use today, they are an important

reminder of how the turn of the century Catawba County farmer chose building materials to suit his purposes. Molasses and lumber were produced at Yoder's Mill, circa 1857.

**Wilfong-Wilson Farm**—This is one of the largest remaining active farms north of NC Highway 10. The antebellum house was built on a central floor plan with end chimneys. George Wilfong died shortly after the house was constructed, leaving the property to his daughter, who married Major Wilson several years later. Major Wilson was a veteran of the Civil War, making the property significant from both an historical and architectural perspective.



*Wilfong-Wilson Farm*

**Weidner Rock House**—This house is a two-story stone structure constructed in 1789 by the son of the first settler in the area. Although the house was originally constructed in the flood-plain overlooking the confluence of the Henry and Jacob Fork Rivers, it was moved uphill to its current location in the 1840s with teams of mule-drawn wagons.



*Oakwood Farm*

**Oakwood Farm**—Owners of the farm property donated 66 acres of the tract to the Catawba Lands Conservancy for open space preservation. Another area of the original Oakwood Farm tract has been put into a conservation easement. The owner is in the process of restoring the historic buildings located on the property, and may eventually, open the farm to the public as an historical/educational resource.

**Shuford Cemetery**—This was the a burial plot for the Shufords which is no longer owned by the family. It is an un-kept plot, surrounded by a stone wall, and contains approximately 33 grave sites.

**Michael Weidner Cemetery**—Owned by Catawba County Historical Association, this 1/10-acre plot has burial sites dating from 1700 to 1923. The site has limited visitation due to privacy concerns of an adjacent neighbor.



*Weidner Rock House*

The following properties which are located at the western boundary of the Plan area, along Hickory-Lincolnton Highway, are listed on the National Register. *See Map 12: Cultural Resources.*



*Grace Union Church  
and Cemetery*



*Abraham-Anthony Farm*



*Rudisill-Wilson House*

**Shuford-Hoover House**—The house is a well preserved cottage originally built in 1790 with later additions around 1840 and 1925 to accommodate the large farm families that lived there during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The original portion of the house was turned into the rear log kitchen.

**Grace Union Church and Cemetery**—Located south of the Rocky Ford Road intersection, Grace Union Church is the only remaining mid-nineteenth century church building in Catawba County. Although the church was constructed in 1857, the cemetery has grave markers dating from the 1820s.

**Abraham-Anthony Farm**—Located south on Hickory-Lincolnton Highway, the farm contains a two-story brick house built in 1877. The Anthony House is one of the oldest remaining late 19<sup>th</sup> century brick residences and features a hipped roof and entrance porch with lattice work, which is unique to this period house in Catawba County.

Four additional farmhouses located east of Startown Road, but within proximity of the Plan area, are listed on the National Register

**Rudisill-Wilson House**—Located along Startown Road, this house was constructed between 1818 and 1821. The house was built following the traditional center hall floor plan, one room deep, and contains most of its interior fabric, including the substantial Federal mantels. After being sold to Mr. Ezekial Wilson in 1855, the property remained in the Wilson family until 1949.

**Franklin D. Reinhardt House and William Pinckney Reinhardt House**—Located along Sigmon Dairy Road, these houses are nearly identical, having been constructed by two brothers in the mid-1840s. Mr. Franklin Reinhardt served four terms in the North Carolina General Assembly before returning to the area to serve as one of Catawba County's first magistrates.

**Harren-Hood House**—Located further north on Sigmon Dairy Road, this house is a two-story, late-Victorian frame structure built around 1908.



The three-bay-wide house features weather board siding, a brick pier foundation now infilled with bricks, and a gable roof with overhanging eaves. Mr. Alonzo Harren sold the house and land to Mrs. Ella Hood in 1925 and it has remained in the Hood family since.

Persons interested in a more comprehensive inventory are encouraged to consult the Catawba County Historical Association or Sidney Halma's *Catawba County: An Architectural History*.

### **HMONG CULTURAL FACILITY**

The Hmong Community owns approximately 34 acres within the Plan area along Rocky Ford Road. Currently, the parcel is the site of quarterly festivals and scheduled soccer games. The Community's goal is to further educate all members, from children to senior citizens, on Hmong customs, family values, good citizenship by becoming more involved in social, economic and political processes, and computer skills. Members would like to construct a building to enhance their festivals and provide space for year-around educational programs, after school activities, weddings, funerals, graduations, and meeting space for other organizations and businesses. See *Map 12: Cultural Resources*.



*Hmong Association Property*

In addition to activities on the Hmong property site, the Community is using a portion of the Eco-Complex site for crop growing. The Community has been working with the County Cooperative Extension to learn agricultural techniques suitable to this climate.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- CP-1 Recognize and protect cultural resources.
- CP-2 Preserve properties of local and national historic significance.
- CP-3 Encourage the application of adaptive reuse techniques for historic properties.

## ***PLAN GOALS***

- CG-1 Encourage and support the Catawba County Historical Association in its endeavor to identify historic properties.
- CG-2 Incorporate a database of historical sites on the County GIS system, so that proposed developments on or near significant historical areas can be flagged. This could help preserve the character of the area.
- CG-3 Create an interactive map, identifying historic properties with links to associated State Historic documents.
- CG-4 Explore creating a County Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- CG-5 Work with the Hmong Community as they develop a community center.







